

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

What is claimed is:

1-10 (canceled)

11. (currently amended) A method for distributing a print task among a plurality of printing devices, said method comprising:

receiving a print task at a print system component, ~~which resides on a computing device from which said print task originates;~~

receiving user input comprising a cluster printing selection at said print system component, wherein said selection identifies specific printing devices and communicates a specific quantity of printing devices;

combining said print task with said cluster printing selection using said print system component on said computing device thereby creating driver-dependent data;

transmitting said driver-dependent data to a printer driver, ~~wherein said printer driver resides on said computing device;~~

creating spool data from said driver-dependent data, using said printer driver, ~~wherein said spool data consists of a print task ticket specifying capability requirements of the print task and the driver-dependent data, and wherein said spool data is compatible as input to specific printer drivers corresponding to each of said specific printing devices on said computing device;~~

determining-, with said print system component on said computing device, portions of said spool data to be distributed to each of said specific printing devices; and

determining, with said print system component on said computing device, the output capacity of said specific printing devices;

despooling said spool data in accordance with said cluster printing selection wherein said despooling comprises distribution of said print task to said specific printing devices in substantial proportion to each of said specific printing device's output capacity, wherein said distribution results in creation of distributed spool data portions and wherein said despooling further comprises concurrent parallel playback of said spool data portions to said specific printer drivers corresponding to each of said specific printing devices, wherein each of said specific printer drivers converts said distributed spool data portions into device-dependent data portions compatible with said corresponding specific printing devices and each of said specific printer drivers spools said device-dependent data portions to said print system component; and

despooling, with said print system component, said device-dependent data portions to said specific printing devices, wherein said despooling with said print system component is performed asynchronously and in parallel.

12. (previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said determining the output capacity comprises querying a local printer through a system bus.

13. (previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said determining the output capacity comprises querying a network printer using a network communications protocol.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said determining the output capacity comprises querying a printer driver.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said determining the output capacity comprises accessing a printer attribute registry.

16. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein said print system component comprises a print processor.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said determining the output capacity comprises estimating the capability of some of said multiple printing devices.

18. (currently amended) A method for distributing a print task among a plurality of printing devices, said method comprising:

receiving a print task at a print system component, which resides on a computing device from which said print task originates;

receiving user input comprising a cluster printing selection at said print system component, wherein said selection identifies specific printing devices and communicates a specific quantity of printing devices;

combining said print task with said cluster printing selection using said print system component on said computing device, thereby creating driver-dependent data;

transmitting said driver-dependent data to a printer driver, wherein said printer driver resides on said computing device;

creating spool data from said driver-dependent data, using said printer driver, wherein said spool data consists of a print task ticket specifying capability requirements of the print task and the driver-dependent data, and wherein said spool data is compatible as input to specific printer drivers corresponding to each of said specific printing devices on said computing device;

modifying said spool data according to said cluster printing selection, with said print system component on said computing device;

determining the output capacity of multiple printing devices comprising said specific printing devices, with said print system component on said computing device; and

despooling said spool data in accordance with said cluster printing selection wherein said despooling comprises distribution of said print task to said specific printing devices in substantial proportion to each of said specific printing device's output capacity, wherein said distribution results in creation of distributed spool data portions and wherein said despooling further comprises concurrent parallel playback of said spool data portions to multiple said specific printer drivers corresponding to each of said specific printing devices, wherein each of said specific printer drivers converts said distributed spool data portions into device-dependent data portions compatible with said corresponding specific printing devices and each of said specific printer drivers spools said device-dependent data portions to said print system component; and

despooling, with said print system component, said device-dependent data portions to said specific printing devices, wherein said despooling with said print system component is performed asynchronously and in parallel.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein said output capacity comprises a printer's speed in PPM.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein a determination of said output capacity comprises a determination of a printing device's disk storage capacity.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein a determination of said output capacity comprises an analysis of a printing device's rasterization pipeline.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein a determination of said output capacity comprises an evaluation of alternative rasterization methods and a selection of the fastest method for a specific print task.

23. (currently amended) A printing system for distributing a print task among a plurality of printing devices, said system comprising:

- a single computing device comprising the following elements;
- an application for generating a print task;
- a print task receiver for receiving said print task;
- a cluster selection receiver for receiving a cluster printing selection comprising an identification of specific printing devices and a quantity of specific printing devices;
- a combiner for combining said print task with said cluster printing selection thereby creating driver-dependent data;

a transmitter for transmitting said driver-dependent data to a printer driver;
a driver for creating spool data from said driver-dependent data, wherein said spool data consists of a print task ticket specifying capability requirements of the print task and the driver-dependent data, and wherein said spool data is compatible as input to specific printer drivers corresponding to each of said specific printing devices;

a modifier for modifying said spool data according to said cluster printing selection;

a capacity determiner for determining the output capacity of multiple printing devices comprising said specific printing devices;

a portioner for determining portions of said spool data to be distributed to each of said specific printing devices; and

a despooler for despooling said spool data portions in accordance with said cluster printing selection wherein said despooling comprises distribution of said spool data portions to said specific printing devices in substantial proportion to each of said specific printing device's output capacity, wherein said distribution results in creation of distributed spool data portions and wherein said despooling further comprises concurrent parallel playback of said spool data portions to said specific multiple printer drivers, wherein each of said specific printer drivers converts said distributed spool data portions into device-dependent data portions compatible with said corresponding specific printing devices and each of said specific printer drivers spools said device-dependent data portions to said print system component; and

wherein said print system component despools, said device-dependent data portions to said specific printing devices, wherein said despooling with said print system component is performed asynchronously and in parallel.

24. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium comprising instructions for distributing a print task among a plurality of printing devices, said instructions comprising the acts of:

receiving a print task at a print system component, which resides on a computing device from which said print task originates;

receiving user input comprising a cluster printing selection at said print system component, wherein said selection identifies specific printing devices and a quantity of specific printing devices;

combining said print task with said cluster printing selection using said print system component on said computing device, thereby creating driver-dependent data;

transmitting said driver-dependent data to a printer driver, ~~wherein said printer driver resides on said computing device~~;

creating spool data from said driver-dependent data, using said printer driver, wherein said spool data consists of a print task ticket specifying capability requirements of the print task and the driver-dependent data, and wherein said spool data is compatible as input to specific printer drivers corresponding to each of said specific printing devices on said computing device;

modifying said spool data according to said cluster printing selection, using said print system component on said computing device;

determining the output capacity of multiple printing devices comprising said specific printing devices, using said print system component on said computing device;

determining portions of said spool data to be distributed to each of said specific printing devices, using said print system component on said computing device; and

despooling said spool data in accordance with said cluster printing selection wherein said despooling comprises distribution of said spool data portions to said

specific printing devices in substantial proportion to each of said specific printing device's output capacity, wherein said distribution results in creation of distributed spool data portions and wherein said despooling further comprises concurrent parallel playback of said spool data portions to said specific multiple printer drivers, wherein each of said specific printer drivers converts said distributed spool data portions into device-dependent data portions compatible with said corresponding specific printing devices and each of said specific printer drivers spools said device-dependent data portions to said print system component; and

wherein said print system component despools, said device-dependent data portions to said specific printing devices, wherein said despooling with said print system component is performed asynchronously and in parallel.

25. (canceled)